

CHAPTER 9

DRIVER TRAINING AND SEAT BELT USAGE

9.1 PURPOSE

This Chapter of the Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Safety and Health Handbook details the defensive driver training requirements for employees who operate government owned or leased vehicles. It also outlines seat belt usage requirements for all employees who operate or ride in vehicles for official business.

9.2 AUTHORITIES

A. Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) 5400, "Motor Vehicle Manual," dated June 20, 2007.

B. Executive Order 13043, "Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States," dated April 16, 1997.

9.3 DRIVER TRAINING PROGRAM

A. Training. Employees who have been authorized to operate a government owned or leased vehicle must participate in an 8-hour (or equivalent) defensive driving course. The course must be completed within 90 days after the employee is authorized to operate a government owned or leased vehicle.

B. Refresher Training. Employees who have been authorized to operate a government owned or leased vehicle must be provided refresher defensive driving training every third year after participation in the initial course. Acceptable refresher driver training may be:

1. Participation in a full 8-hour course, or
2. Participation in a 4-hour refresher driver training course.

Defensive driver training is highly encouraged for all AMS employees, regardless of whether or not they operate a government owned or leased vehicle.

C. Supervisors' Responsibilities. Supervisors shall:

1. Ensure all government owned or leased vehicle operators receive defensive driver training as described in A and B above.
2. Document all defensive driver training and maintain records of completion of training for 3 years. The training records should include the employee name, date of training, source of training, and length of the training.

3. Certify to the Program's Collateral Duty Safety Officer at the end of each fiscal year that training has been completed.

4. Make a positive effort to offer defensive driver training to all AMS employees.

D. Training Sources.

1. Defensive driver training may be obtained from nationally recognized organizations or State/local government agencies who offer driver improvement programs. Training provided to operators will be paid for by the Program and must meet the requirements outlined in this Chapter and MRP 5400, "Motor Vehicle Manual."

2. Organizations that offer defensive driver training:

a. General Services Administration (GSA).

i. Operators of government owned or leased vehicles can receive free on-line training through the GSA website. Go to <http://www.gsa.gov/> and click on Services, then Vehicle Leasing, then National Safety Program, then GSA Fleet Defensive Driving Course.

ii. GSA offers free use of defensive driver videos. The GSA Vehicle Operation Video Library can be accessed on the GSA website. Go to <http://www.gsa.gov/> and click on Services, then Vehicle Leasing, then National Safety Program, then Driver Safety and Vehicle Operation Video Library.

b. National Safety Council (NSC). NSC offers on-line courses and on-site training. NSC offers USDA employees a GSA-negotiated reduced price for on-line training when more than 50 employees participate.

c. American Automobile Association (AAA). Most AAA offices offer 6 or 8-hour courses on-site. Contact local AAA offices for fees.

9.4 SEAT BELT USE BY ALL AMS EMPLOYEES

A. AMS Seat Belt Policy.

1. Executive Order 13043, "Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States," mandates "each Federal employee occupying any seating position of a motor vehicle on official business, whose seat is equipped with a seat belt, shall have the seat belt properly fastened at all times when the vehicle is in motion."

2. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 states that "the head of each agency shall acquire, maintain, and require the use of safety equipment, personal

protective equipment, and devices reasonably necessary to protect employees.” Title 29 Part 1960, “Basic Program Elements for Federal Employee Occupational Safety and Health Programs and Related Matters,” reiterates the requirements stated in the Act, and adds that “Employees shall use safety equipment, personal protective equipment, and other devices and procedures provided or directed by the agency, necessary for their protection.” The seat belt in a motor vehicle is personal protective equipment (PPE). Therefore, **AMS employees are required to use a seat belt when operating or riding in a government owned or leased vehicle, rental vehicle, or privately owned vehicle on official business.**

B. Responsibilities.

1. Operators shall wear a seat belt and require each passenger to wear a seat belt at all times when driving on official business.
2. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is concerned about employee safety and holds the employer responsible for ensuring employees use PPE such as seat belts. To meet that requirement, USDA and AMS must have systems in place to verify the use of PPE. Therefore, supervisors shall:
 - a. Ensure that each employee who drives a government owned or leased vehicle, rental vehicle, or privately owned vehicle on official business or who rides in a government owned or leased vehicle, rental vehicle, or privately owned vehicle on official business is issued a copy of Executive Order 13043.
 - b. Determine whether the driver and passengers were wearing seat belts in any accident involving a government owned or leased vehicle, rental vehicle, or privately owned vehicle. The supervisor may ascertain this information either from the driver, the passengers, a police report, or other reliable means. The supervisor shall record his/her findings on the SF-91 Motor Vehicle Accident Report in the “Comments” section.
 - c. Monitor seat belt usage whenever possible. When riding with an operator or when observing an operator of a government owned or leased vehicle, rental vehicle, or privately owned vehicle, supervisors should make note of the seat belt usage. The supervisor may note the observance in any format but the information should be retrievable to provide to the Program’s Collateral Duty Safety Officer as outlined in d, below. If a government owned or leased vehicle, rental vehicle, or privately owned vehicle driver or passenger is not wearing a seat belt, the supervisor shall counsel the employee, document the incident, and provide the employee(s) a copy of Executive Order 13043. Disciplinary action may be taken against employees who repeatedly fail to wear a seat belt.
 - d. Report to their Program’s Collateral Duty Safety Officer, at the end of the fiscal year, the approximate number of employees they observed who were not wearing seat belts while driving or riding in a government owned or leased vehicle, rental

vehicle, or privately owned vehicle on official business. The information provided to the Safety Officers is passed on to the Department and to OSHA.

9.5 RESOURCES

A. MRP 5400:

<http://agnis/sites/SS/default.aspx> and click on “Motor Vehicle Safety Links” on the right side of the page.

B. Executive Order 13043:

<http://agnis/sites/SS/default.aspx> and click on “Motor Vehicle Safety Links” on the right side of the page.

C. AMS Safety and Health Handbook:

<http://agnis/sites/SS/default.aspx> and click on AMS Safety and Health Handbook on the left side of the page.

D. Questions should be directed to the Program Collateral Duty Safety Officer.